

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 1917

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, BG, IN

SUBJECT: BREAKTHROUGH ON FARAKKA

1. THE APRIL 16-18 VISIT OF INDIAN AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION MINISTER JAGJIVAN RAM TO DACCA ENDED WITH AN INTERIM AGREEMENT WHICH WILL ENABLE INDIA TO DIVERT WATERS FROM THE GANGA AT THE FARAKKA BARRAGE TO THE HOOGLY OVER A FORTH DAY PERIOD. THE INTERIM AGREEMENT DOES NOT, HOWEVER, EXTEND BEYOND THE FORTY DAYS AND, AS THE JOINT PRESS RELEASE STRESSES, "DISCUSSIONS REGARDING ALLOCATIONS OF FAIR WEATHER FLOWS OF THE GANGA DURING LEAN MONTHS IN TERMS OF THE PRIME MINISTERS' DECLARATION OF MAY, 1974 ARE CONTINUING..."

2. THE INTERIM AGREEMENT, RELFECTING THE INDIAN POSITION THAT "IT IS ESSENTIAL TO RUN THE FEEDER CANAL OF THE FARAKKA BARRAGE DURING THE CURRENT LEAN PERIOD", PERMITS THE FOLLOWING WITHDRAWALS FROM THE GANGA DURING FOUR TEN-DAY PERIODS:

APRIL 21-30 11,000 CUSECS

MAY 1-10 12,000 CUSECS

MAY 11-20 15,000 CUSECS

MAY 21-31 16,000 CUSECS

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3. COMMENT: THE INTERIM AGREEMENT DOES NOT SETTLE THE FARAKKA ISSUE WITH FINALITY, BUT IT DOES REPRESENT A SUBSTANTIAL STEP FORWARD. SINCE THE INDIANS HAVE BEEN ASSERTING THAT THEY REQUIRE 40,000 OF THE GANGA'S 55,000 CUSECS LEAN PERIOD FLOW, THE BENGALLEES BELIEVE THEY HAVE MADE A SOLID GAIN IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH INDIA, SHEIKH MUJIB WAS DESCRIBED BY ONE SOURCE AS ELATED. THE FORTY-DAY ARRANGEMENT IS, HOWEVER, ONLY A TRIAL, AND IT SEEMS DOUBTFUL THAT THE INDIANS WILL CONSIDER THE WITHDRAWALS UNDER THE INTERIM AGREEMENT TO BE A PRECEDENT.

4. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE INDIANS MAY BE LESS DEMANDING IN THE FINAL SETTLEMENT, AND THAT THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT IS INTENDED TO CONDITION CALCUTTA AND WEST BENGAL TO SOMETHING LESS THAN ANTICIPATED. BUT IF THIS IS TO BE THE CASE, IT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING TO FIND THAT A FINAL DECISION ON THE FARAKKA BARRAGE WHICH GIVES BANGLADESH A GENEROUS SHARE OF THE GANGE WATERS IS MADE PART OF A PACKAGE WHICH ALSO RESOLVES THE MARITIME BOUNDARY ISSUE. THE INDIANS SEEM TO BE AS TOUGH AS EVER ON THE LATTER ISSUE AND THE RECENT REJECTION OF THE BANGALEE BASELINE CONCEPT AT THE LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE IN GENEVA COULD REINFORCE THEIR DETERMINATION, THUS, INDIA COULD BE PREPARING TO BE RELATIVELY MAGNANIMOUS RE FARAKKA IN ORDER TO HAVE A TRADE OFF ON THE MARITIME BOUNDARY BOSTER

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